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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 002149

SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: STEADY ATTACKS PRESSURE GOVERNMENT

WHILE EMERGENCY REGULATIONS ARE RENEWED

REF: A. COLOMBO 2118

[1B](#). USDAO COLOMBO IRR 6816002906

Classified By: DCM James F. Entwistle. For reasons 1.4 (B & D).

SUMMARY

[11](#). (SBU) The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) continues to goad the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and Sri Lankan Navy (SLN) in the north, launching nine small-scale attacks against military targets since December 20. The back-to-back attacks seem designed to increase pressure on the new government to either overreact or concede terms in future talks. Following a December 20 protest in Parliament over Army tactics, a delegation of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarians met President Rajapaksa and the Service Chiefs on December 21. TNA participants described the meeting's atmosphere as tough and unproductive. During the TNA's absence from parliament, other MPs unanimously voted to renew the Emergency Regulations for another 30 days. End Summary.

SHOOT, SHOOT, LOOK, SHOOT

[12](#). (C) Suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) militants have launched a series of eight separate grenade and rifle attacks against the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) in the Jaffna Peninsula since December 20, killing two soldiers and wounding six. Following the attacks, the SLA conducted cordon-and-search operations of houses and villages to flush out the culprits, and on December 22 the local press reported that villagers in Jaffna chased away LTTE cadres trying to plant an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) intended for an SLA patrol. The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) head in Jaffna told poloff on December 22 that the SLMM had suspended its patrols in Jaffna following the discovery of five claymore-type IEDs in separate locations along main roads in Jaffna. In the northern district of Mannar two small Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) patrol boats were attacked on the morning of December 22, leaving one sailor wounded and a boat with three crewmen missing and feared dead.

SHOUT, TALK, SHOUT

[13](#). (C) On December 20, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) MPs disrupted parliamentary procedures by shouting allegations of "state terror" and demanding President Rajapaksa, who also holds the Defense portfolio, answer for the Army's handling of a civilian protest in Jaffna the previous day (Ref A). President Rajapaksa met with a delegation of nine TNA representatives on December 21. According to TNA MPs Pathmini Sithamparanatham and Selvam Adaikalanatham, the president initially listened to their grievances, assured the TNA that the Army was not resuming hostilities in Jaffna, that extra security measures were not required and that he would look after the safety of civilians. The visitors reported that the President then called Army Commander Sarath Fonseka and Naval Chief Daya Sandagiri into the meeting, after which, according to our MP interlocutors, the tone of the meeting changed significantly. When the MPs complained about recent incidents in Jaffna, the service chiefs reportedly denied everything, and General Fonseka asserted that he would increase security measures. The MPs described Rajapaksa as siding with the service chiefs and echoing their hard-line. Adaikalanatham, who had met several times with former President Chandrika Kumaratunga, said he had never heard such a hard line adopted by Rajapaksa's predecessor.

WHILE YOU WERE OUT

[14](#). (SBU) While the TNA was engaged with President Rajapaksa, the Sinhalese-dominated parliament introduced a bill to extend the Emergency Regulations (for the fourth time) an additional 30 days. With the TNA otherwise engaged, the extension until January 20 was renewed without debate. TNA MP Joseph Pararajasingham later claimed that the bill had been

introduced early to take advantage of the TNA's absence.

COMMENT

15. (C) Recent attacks against the security forces in the north, albeit small-scale, have occurred with alarming frequency since the beginning of December. At this stage, it is difficult to tell if the LTTE is hoping these continuous pin-prick attacks will provoke an over-reaction by the military--and thus a pretext for resumed hostilities--or if the Tigers simply are trying to maximize pressure on the new government before a possible return to the table for talks. Overreaction by the Army would obviously play into the LTTE's hand, branding the Sinhalese as oppressors and helping galvanize a war-weary civilian Tamil community. The government, from the President on down, has made clear, however, that it is committed to maintaining the Cease-Fire Agreement.

LUNSTEAD